Interview with Everett L. Headrick

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EVERETT L. HEADRICK

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Q: Mr. Headrick and I are seated at the Spokane Club in Spokane, Washington which is relatively neutral ground for the two of us since neither of us lives here. We are about to begin the first interview with Mr. Headrick. Mr. Headrick spent many years with USAID, as an Agricultural Officer, a manager of projects and programs, an evaluator. When he retired, he continued many activities with USAID. My plan is that we will cover them all, but we will begin where all these interviews begin, with Mr. Everett Headrick's early years and how he learned about and became interested in possibilities of international development service.

Early years , education and work experience

HEADRICK: As a boy I was born and raised in the Moscow, Idaho - Troy, Idaho area, graduated from High School in Troy, went to the University of Idaho, majored in Agriculture. Also while I was in college I worked professionally as a welder and cutter for the Idaho Machine and Sheet Metal Company where they rebuilt or added the self-leveling devices to all self-propelled combines in the United States.

Following graduation from the University of Idaho, I commenced work in Wilder, Idaho as a Vocational Agriculture instructor. In 1955 we were paid quite low (about $4,200 a year). The Idaho Ag teachers tried to get a salary increase and the Idaho Legislature kept complaining that we were overpaid and underworked. Coincidentally the Boise Statesman ran an editorial to that effect. On the same day I read an article in the old Pageant magazine on overseas work. So I sat down, wrote a brief letter to the Personnel Officer of the International Cooperation Administration and asked if, for a change, he couldn't give me a job where I would be overworked and underpaid. I was dissatisfied with what I was doing. In about 3 months I was in the first Junior Overseas Officers trainee program. Following training and orientation in Washington, DC, I was assigned to Libya.

Aside from the slight bit of humor I used, the main factor that got me into AID or the International Cooperation Administration so readily was the fact that I used Don Theophilus, then Dean of Agriculture, later President of the University of Idaho, as a reference. I'm certain that carried a great amount of weight with the ICA.

Q: At this time you were married, were you not? What was your wife's thought and reaction to this whole question?

Joined USAID and assigned to Libya - 1957

HEADRICK: I had been working part time with Equitable Life Insurance and they offered either Nampa and Caldwell, Idaho, which are major population areas, to me if I would quit teaching and join them full time. About the same time I had a response from the Director of Personnel accepting me, so I laid the letter in front of my wife and said “Which would you prefer to do, travel or stay in the States and work?” She said, “Let's travel.” So I had her full cooperation and support in going into the foreign service. When we arrived in Libya, I can't remember the Deputy Director's name, (he was one of the dollar-a-year men,) called us in and there were six or seven of us. (These were Junior Overseas Officer Trainees.) He told us how the mission had anxiously been awaiting our arrival and what a contribution

we could make to the mission and how we were badly needed by the mission. As a kind of an afterthought, his concluding remark was, “By the way, what are you here for?” We literally rolled in the aisle, he was dead serious with his question.

I would have to rate Libya as one of my most interesting assignments. I think most people in the foreign service believe their first assignment is always the most interesting. However, this was unique, in that to sidestep the inability of the Libyan government to provide support to development programs, we set up the Libyan-American Joint Services, which was a government within a government. While it was operating we had tremendous success with many projects. We had a lot of activity going on. Perhaps the most important aspect though was our training program, selecting trainees to send to American universities. Once we withdrew support from Libyan-American Joint Services, within a matter of six weeks all the vehicles that had been purchased and assigned to projects disappeared, or were in use (not that they were stolen) in other parts of the Libyan government. The Nazarates (Ministries) were jealous of the power of the Libyans we had trained and promoted. The Nazarates fired or demoted these personnel and an outstanding success story literally turned to ashes overnight.

This strengthened my position that we should never again be involved in a program that did not strengthen the whole government. Had we worked within the established government, trained Libyan personnel would have assisted in improving governmental functions and hopefully the LAJS projects would have become an integral component of the appropriate Nazarates.

Q: The Libyan-American Joint Services were from roughly what year?

HEADRICK: I don't know when they started. I arrived in 1957, about 1959 or '60 LAJS was terminated. The reason I said the training component was most important was that even though these people were out of favor with the Nazarates, they later rose to the top within the various ministries, organizations and private business. So I would rate

much of our training program a success. This is to say we didn't have a lot of fun, feel a sense of accomplishment and pride in our projects. In the short term rapid mobilization of development resources was accomplished, we selected and trained competent local staff, and in bypassing an archaic governmental organization we were able to show immediate impact on the local economy. One of the most successful and labor intensive projects was the water spreading and cistern renovation project. In both areas we utilized ancient Grecian structures to renovate for improved water use for crop production and water availability for human and livestock consumption. Other projects were livestock improvement programs, development of an agricultural extension service, horticultural programs, grain storage and handling, etc.

Q: After the Libyan-American Joint Services were abolished, did the mission function differently?

HEADRICK: They tried to function within the existing Nazarates (the equivalent of a ministry or department.) By the time LAJS was abolished I was living in Cyrene, working in Baida as an Extension Advisor. My vehicle was the only vehicle available to the extension service in that area. One had been assigned under the LAJS system and that was pulled into another area. Extension worked directly with the Nazarate of Agriculture. Adequate funding from the Nazarate of Agriculture was provided to the Baida extension office because of my strong friendly relationship with the senior staff of the Nazarate. At this time either I or my counterpart could call senior Nazarate staff and obtain appropriate levels of support. Other American advisors and their counterparts often did not have the ties to the Nazarate my counterpart and I had and therefore did not obtain the support I experienced.

One thing I did that was interesting, with Baida as the new capital of Libya at that time, my project was to produce vegetables for the capital. The first year I worked with farmers and I don't think I increased vegetable availability in the local market by one kilogram. That winter I went around to many of the mosques and talked to the Mullahs. We developed a program based on the 4-H system, where I and my counterpart would provide technical

education and within the Mullahs' areas we would provide time for Islamic religious education. We drew several of these men in, they were in their '50s and '60s and older and they were walking 5 or 6 miles at least once or twice a week to go out and check on children participating in the program. So we had a tremendous resource in local leaders. This I found very interesting, but many people in the mission raised their eyebrows at my having worked Islamic education into the program, so I never felt I really had much support from the mission and my immediate supervisor. My feeling was that we were there as agricultural technicians, not missionaries and Islam was the state religion so why not let use religion to support an agricultural production program.

Q: What was the effect of it?

HEADRICK: The effect of it was that we flooded the market in Baida with vegetables. We looked at production and not the total economic picture of increased production and ended up driving the price of vegetables down. However, many of the children made more money from their vegetable projects than their parents did from wheat farming. So the next year we had even more vegetables in the market as adults switched from wheat to vegetable production.

Q: Big production increase and consequent, predictable effect on the price. Over the next couple of years did it begin to balance out, so that there was more production but also a better price?

HEADRICK: I can't tell you this because about that time we were transferred to Nigeria. However, at the time we were living in Cyrene, Ambassador John Jones had a summer home in Cyrene, just below our residence. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, he could not be there, the DCM could not come up to Baida. Also the Prime Minister and I were friends. I went to work one morning after having listened to the Voice of America and the Prime Minister's office called inviting me to have tea with the Prime Minister. I dashed home, changed out of work clothes and field boots into a suit, had tea with the Prime Minister.

We discussed Cuba. Following that I called the Embassy and told them I'd had tea with the Prime Minister and the results of our conversation. I was ordered down to Benghazi to go through related files and hold discussions with the Political Officer and so on. For the next two weeks I wore a business suit to the office and did not go to the field, because various ministers were inviting me to have tea and discuss Cuba. Which for a twenty-seven year old kid was pretty heady stuff.

Also, I learned to speak Arabic well enough, I couldn't read it or write it, but I would take my extension personnel camping, along with blackboards and chalk, etc. This was one way to reduce interruptions by their families and local community, so we could do intensive training. My counterpart and I held some very effective training programs camped out. The men seemed to enjoy it and I could see a definite change in activity, as people with more confidence started going out, meeting farmers and working with them. My counterpart, Juma Diab, and I stood in back and provided support and advice to these men. This worked extremely well. This assignment also taught me a lot about working with counterparts. Which is a tremendously important factor in our development activities. In that, I always tried to leave my counterpart in a position of authority and if I had any criticism, we would meet privately following a meeting or a training session. I never publicly criticized him, although he needed a lot of it. We became very close friends. Our families visited back and forth. When I left Libya, I understand he left the extension service and became a multimillionaire businessman in trading and oil supplies for Libya. Maybe my efforts paid off in an unintended manner.

Q: A key thing here, was that when you first arrived, Libya was dirt poor in all respects. By the time you left, oil had been discovered and begun be exploited. So a great deal of money was then coming into the country.

HEADRICK: That's true. This had an impact too, in that there was a decreasing interest in agriculture. All the younger men were looking to the oil fields as the area in which

they were interested because they could all see the wealth there and the possibilities. Agriculture took a very rapid demotion in the eyes of most people.

It was also here that another thing happened that was of interest. When Libya gained their independence, only a few people were college graduates. The Nazarate of Agriculture in Saranika, had only 6 graduates. They were all in a car coming back from Derna, they had a bottle of local liquor called Boka in the car and they had a car wreck. I didn't know about it until several days later when I received a call in my home in Cyrene, saying, “Mr. Headrick, you have to come to Benghazi immediately.” So I went down. Here were all six in one room. They closed and locked the door and told me I had to help them or they were all facing prison, because they had alcohol in a government vehicle. So I asked who the judge would be, if he was one of their clique, and they said, “No.” So I said, “OKAY, if they could change the judge to someone from their clique, I'll go to court and testify that I asked you to buy me some black market gin.” Which I never told anybody in the mission about at the time. They changed the judge, I testified in court that I had asked these people to buy me some black market gin, but since they were good Moslems I assumed they didn't know the difference between gin and Boka. For people attending court, the judge gave me a chewing out for corrupting young Moslem men and the case was thrown out. Thereafter, my supervisor, Frank Ernst and others could never understand why I got the support from the Nazarate that I did, whenever I needed help or money or vehicles I'd pick up the phone and call one of the six men and there was never any question. I had the support I needed. Obviously, I didn't tell anyone in the mission at the time.

Q: This may be the first time it's been revealed! Before we move past Libya, there were some other points you wanted to make, such as observations of the changes that were taking place.

HEADRICK: The one factor that I was really aggravated with in Libya was the fact that we would be told what our budget was and then try to design our activities to absorb the budget. It's far more frustrating and far less effective to have too much money to work with,

as we did in Libya, than it is to be in a program where you have to fight for your funding and do detailed and careful planning with the host government in order to obtain and use the funds. This was another problem with Libya. We simply had more money in many of our activities than we knew what to do with.

Q: The reason for that was our strategic interest, the US strategic interest in the country, and specifically in Wheelus Airbase. I know this, I was the desk officer for Libya for about a year in ICA, and I know the time the oil just began to come in. You felt that compared to other countries you went to later, that it had been a disservice from a standpoint of project management and perhaps the development activities themselves, to have them awash in money.

HEADRICK: The government of Yugoslavia built a huge TB hospital in Cyrene. The head of the hospital was a communist party member who was very strict with the staff. I knew the staff very well and none of them liked the director of the Hospital. I told Ambassador Jones this story one day, and he said, “Well, let's make life easier for the staff.” So he and I invited the director of the hospital to go out fishing with us and bird shooting. The Ambassador put him on all of his guest lists and then started telling all the other bloc ambassadors what a great man this director of the hospital was. Within eight months he was recalled to Yugoslavia and another person assigned that was far less demanding of the staff and more cooperative with them.

Q: Dirty Tricks, all for a good purpose. You mentioned that you were about to be transferred and that the gift of the cat were connected to that. From Libya where did you go?

Transfer to Kaduna, Nigeria as Agricultural Program Assistant - 1960

HEADRICK: We had a daughter die in Libya, she's still buried in Benghazi in the British military cemetery. As a consequence of our transfer, we were supposed to go to a fairly remote area in Nigeria, but my wife did not feel comfortable with that. So it took

several months of home leave while we worked this out. Eventually I was assigned as the Agricultural Program Assistant in Kaduna, Nigeria. Kaduna is in the north, I guess a hundred miles or so southwest of Kano. We had a huge program there, we had three hundred and sixty or forty people throughout Nigeria working in Agricultural programs. In fact, at one point we could have established a University of Idaho Alumni because we had about forty men in agriculture, who were graduates of the University of Idaho. We called ourselves the Idaho Mafia. All Americans. Our so called Mafia hung together for most of my career, until many of these people retired and left the agency. We built some deep friendships there, too. Northern Nigeria was a huge, huge area and the only way we could get out to many projects was through charter aircraft. For busy Ministry of Agriculture or Ministry of Forestry and Animal Resources people, it was the only way we could get them out to see projects and assist in project management, because they couldn't afford a week traveling back and forth between a project site and Kaduna. We chartered planes, flew out, looked over a project, either in a day or stayed overnight and flew back the next day. This was one way we could get Nigerian ministry officials involved in far flung projects. We supported a comprehensive agricultural development program. In Northern Nigeria we had projects supporting agricultural education, university development, development of ground, development of a statistical base, agricultural extension, maize research, and many other activities.

One thing, I forget what year it was, we started insisting that our projects have work plans. We had a Tsetse eradication program with Ministry of Health. They were ready to throw us out of the country for insisting on work plans. The Ministry of Agriculture also was unhappy with us. Written work plans, and objectives were something that they didn't care about. They didn't think we should bother with them and besides that, “Who ever followed a work plan anyway.” Bob Sweet was the Regional Ag Officer, I was the Ag Program Assistant. We met regularly with our Ministry counter parts and the American project officers and the Nigerian project officers. We held people to the work plans, where we had great resentment the first year, the second year, both the Ministry of Agriculture and the

Ministry of Health insisted that their staffs prepare work plans. I don't know how long this lasted, but during the time I was there, work plans and planning for projects became an established part of the Ministries. They weren't strictly followed and adhered to but a start toward planning had been made.

Q: Well they never are, but they are absolutely invaluable to give you guidelines and then you can see where you have to make changes and so forth. That's a very important institutional change.

HEADRICK: Another point, Bucker Shaib was the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Livestock and Forests. He later went on to become a senior man in FAO. One day I was in his office to obtain permission for a consultant to come in to do a study on some topic. Bucker was a good friend personally, he would accept my request. However, first in anger he turned around and hit the bookshelf behind him. He said, “When in the hell are you going to give me people to work. I've got all these studies and nobody to implement them.” Which hit directly at one of our great American weaknesses. If you really don't know what you want to do, send a consultant out to do a study. This has been an irritant to host governments in every country in which I worked. Granted, studies and consultants are necessary and needed, but the thing that's missing is follow-up and implementation on the studies once they are done. Follow-up is missing because of lack of funding, lack of acceptance by the American side, or what have you. But this is a real irritant.

Q: Studies sometimes raise up possibilities or they bury ideas by demonstrating that they can't work. Now the latter obviously is of value, but I would gather that the Permanent Secretary had a sense of what he wanted to do and he wanted people to get at it.

HEADRICK: That's correct, and he eventually, during the meeting, agreed for the study to go on. Subsequently in every country in which I have worked, I have found this to be an extremely sensitive area. I think in our development programs we need to realize that the

studies are important but perhaps we should down play them somewhat or be prepared to follow through and provide needed support to implement the studies.

Q: Thinking over the decades of your experience, have you seen any change in this factor? Does it remain about the same, that is, we still propose them and they're still irritants? Perhaps we propose too many?

HEADRICK: I think we propose too many and they are not an irritant if, as with our project designs, the host government is in full concurrence with what is proposed. Which has been one of the errors, less so today than say, in the '60s and early '70s of the American Assistance program, in that we would go in and design projects with very little host country input. Then hand them the project and ask for their approval and signature, and no matter what we would do the project was always the American project. As the technicians left or programs phased out, most of these programs died on the vine. Wherever we could work with the host government and give them adequate time to have an input and have a great deal of say in project design, the projects were always the host governments projects, not ours. We were just helping. I note that we still have this problem.. A few years ago following retirement, I was on a contract in Uganda. I had talked to the host government officials, had them convinced that we were a small part of the total resource of the project and this project was really theirs and they had to take a leading role in project development. However, we had a junior officer who felt he had to make an impact on the project and within six months these senior Ugandan officials were again saying it's an American project. So this is something we need to be very concerned about.

Q: We have to relearn it with every new generation of staff.

HEADRICK: That's true, and we should not expect either junior or senior staff to micromanage activities. Because every time we fall into that trap we end up with an American project, not a host country project, with a lessening of host country interest and support.

Every assignment was a learning experience, and still is. Another problem that I found in Nigeria was that our livestock advisors took a look at the local livestock and decided that they knew what was better for the livestock industry than the traditional herdsman and they imported new breeds of cattle and poultry from America. The upshot of it was that in order to keep breeding animals alive, we had to keep veterinarians working with them on a daily, if not 24 hour basis. As a consequence, I take a very, very negative view of us importing livestock into countries that have problems with rinderpest and endemic diseases within that country because our livestock genetically cannot handle the endemic diseases.

Q: Did you find either in Nigeria or elsewhere, any livestock projects, that the US was engaged in, that you felt were of value in the long run to the host country?

HEADRICK: While I like livestock, I felt that they had very few programs that really had an impact on livestock production. We tried range management throughout Africa, the big problem with range management projects, is control of livestock numbers. If you can't control livestock, you can't enhance the livestock production or feed for the livestock. In Nigeria, we had tribes shooting at one another as a result of some of our activities in range management. Primarily because we were trying to put in place a rotation grazing system. Some of the tribes that had traditionally used these areas were being fenced out and closed out from their traditional areas which created a great deal of anger. As a consequence of my experience in Nigeria, I take a very dim view of livestock projects where you cannot obtain a commitment from the host country and livestock producer to control numbers.m Incidentally, however, we had one heavy equipment mechanic come over from Utah on a BLM managed project.

Q: Bureau of Land Management. This was a range management project I assume.

HEADRICK: Correct, and he was from Utah. He was very, very frightened of black people and he was in Kaduna for the better part of a week with one illness or another. I finally went down to the airline office, made a reservation for him to travel back to the States and

gave him his choice, either get out into the bush and get to work or go home. He finally went to the bush. Did an outstanding job for us with servicing and repairing equipment and getting it back into operation. But when he came back he showed me photographs that he had taken where he had walked into a herd of wild elephants. They were standing in a semi-circle, their trunks up, their ears forward, a beautiful picture of elephants, but they were ready to charge! All I could say, knowing how he feared Nigerians was “You damn fool!”

Q: Putting himself in mortal peril!

HEADRICK: Absolutely!

The Nigerian program was huge. As a result we had a tremendous impact across the agriculture and forestry sector in northern Nigeria including the development and construction of Ahmadou Bello University. Kansas State University staffed the facility in the early days, they sent out first rate people.

Q: This was in the '60s?

HEADRICK: Yes, the '60s. They sent out first rate people and they did an outstanding job of development. A side light to this story though. As a part of the program, we had sent a Nigerian to Washington State University for undergraduate work. He had tribal markings all over his face, i.e. scars, and he decided that the other students at the university were laughing at him. Ultimately, he was brought back to Nigeria in a straight jacket. I met the attending doctor and the student at the airport. The Nigerian walked off the plane without his straight jacket. Three days later he was back in my office asking how soon he can return to America. I said, “Never.” Ahmadou Bello had advanced to the point where he could go there and get his undergraduate degree. We worry about Americans suffering cultural shock, but the students coming to America often suffer cultural shock themselves. We were there during the fighting in northern Nigeria. In fact, our cook, Alghi Usman Telewade, had been an organizer for the Northern Peoples Party (I believe it was or

Congress or I'm not sure which.) Anyway, he couldn't read and write, but he was an Al Haji and very active socially and so on. The Nigerians were very concerned that foreigners would be caught in some of the disturbances within Kaduna. I learned that there were Nigerians in two other embassy groups, the British and the French as well as the man working for us, and they would come in and tell us, “Sir, at such and such a time there will be a spontaneous demonstration against the Ibos in such and such a quarters. We don't want any Americans there.” The first time I reported this to the Consular officer. He laughed and said, “What's a stupid house boy know about the politics of Nigeria.” We had people caught in the middle of the “spontaneous” outbreak. After that, when I told the Consular officer there was going to be trouble, he would listen and we would alert everybody to stay out of those areas.

Despite this, our cook also had a great many individual friends in the Ibo community (the eastern region.) As they would flee northern Nigeria, they would bring their trunks and boxes by and store them in our garage. It was months before I could get our car in the garage. They would leave them with our cook. As he could find trucks going to the eastern region he'd ship the personal effects off to his friends in Eastern Nigeria. I found this unusual. On the one hand he'd be part of the group organizing “spontaneous” fights or attacks on Ibos, and on the other hand he was helping Ibos move their materials back home.

Q: Fascinating man. In Nigeria you were there for how many tours?

HEADRICK: We were in Nigeria for two tours. With the trouble, my family was coming home on evacuation orders and the day they were scheduled to leave, I received word that my father had died, so I left before they did. However, approval for training in economics at the Foreign Service Institute had been granted. Which I think was one of the best training programs I've ever attended in government service. The program was six months long and we had some of the finest instructors in American economics come in. We also spent a week on our graduation trip, on Wall Street, going into Solomon Brothers, various

banks and brokerages, a tremendous program. Following that I had four or five months of intensive French training, then went to Zaire.

Q: Tell me, this was an FSI course. Was it a special course for AID Officers or was it AID, State, USIA, whatever, commerce department, CIA?

HEADRICK: AID, State, a few CIA people were in there, but primarily State. Motivating the whole operation was the opportunity for State Department people to go on for Master's degrees. Which made competition within the program very high.

In fact one of my friends, Gordon Streeb, who went on to become an ambassador, got his Master's degree, and then when the State Department wouldn't allow him to go on for his Ph.D. at state expense, he resigned, got his Ph.D. in Urban Planning, even though his undergraduate degree was in Agricultural Economics. Then once he completed that he went back and reapplied to the State Department. One earned the equivalent of a B.A. degree in six months. The training provided me with an understanding of economics and strengthened my contribution to program development and management.Assignment in USAID/Zaire as an Agricultural Officer - 1968-71

Q: So, tell us about Zaire and how long you were there and what some of the main agricultural thrusts you were working on were.

HEADRICK: My Zaire assignment lasted three years. The main operating funds were from local currency from PL 480 generated funds. My role was the assistant Ag officer or deputy in a two man post. I spent much of my time traveling around Zaire checking local currency projects, reviewing proposed projects and acting as a co-project manager on a seed production project. I believe field travel was required to improve project development. Projects were proposed by Zairians, other donor groups, missionary groups and others. We had considerable local currency funds and USAID Kinshasa policy was to generate a large number of projects throughout Zaire. At that time very few hotels were in existence. Once I made the circuit I knew where I'd be staying and the families I'd stay with, French,

Belgian, and in one case Zairian family. So I'd carry two suitcases with me on trips such as this, one filled with my clothes and one with brandy, because if I tried to pay these people with money it was an insult, but brandy was something they all liked. So I set my payment at a bottle of brandy per night of stay, which worked very well. I always had a place to stay.

We had a lot of projects in Agriculture. We were trying to do too much in Zaire with too little. It was following the rebellion. I got there in 1968. The rebellion and fighting had stopped only months previously. We had over 50 small projects scattered throughout Zaire. Projects were in the areas of rice production, by Taiwan University of Lubumbashi, construction of classrooms, seed production, improved seed made available, support of agricultural research stations, water supply to villages, area development, etc.

Q: Remind me, the rebellion and fighting between?

HEADRICK: This was the time of the Zairian independence. They had all sorts of people vying to take over the government. Patrice Lumumba was head of the government. Following his assassination, we helped to put Mobutu in power. In retrospect, this was probably one of the gravest errors we've made in Africa.

We were trying to do too much with too little. We had piddling little local currency projects all over the country. Using local currency, limited technical resources, limited direction of the projects. They were based more on our political desire to show activity, than it was on a focused development program. (Show the flag.) I think in the long run that type of program can come back and haunt us all too easily, because of failures, or poorly managed, and poorly developed. The host government people or other nationalities can say, “Well there's another American project.” Whereas, had we had fewer projects with more focus and more technical attention, we would have had greater accomplishments, perhaps. Given the way the Zairian government acts, I don't know.

Q: It would have had a better chance. Zaire as I recall was woefully deficient in persons trained above the high school level in my recollection.

HEADRICK: You're absolutely right. The training was lacking. Also the way the government squandered resources and wealth (the government of Zaire.) As one traveled through Zaire you could see some of the best agricultural land in the world. Tremendous agricultural resources, tremendous mineral resources, tremendous human resources, waiting to be developed. But the government of Zaire squandered it all. The main operating procedure seems to be graft and corruption and steal what you can. Until the government changes and the whole concept of getting what you can while you're in office is thrown out, it's going to be a waste of resource for anyone to invest in Zaire. Yet, on a personal level my wife and daughters and I thoroughly enjoyed living in Zaire. There are some great people living in Zaire, Zairians. I had one couple I stayed with up-country come down a couple years in a row and spend Christmas at our house with us. We just had tremendous relationships.

My observation is that we're going to pay long term in Zaire for our association with Mobutu. Individually, Americans are liked and appreciated, however, as a government, when you get down talking to people in the native quarter, leaders, schoolteachers, etc., they detest us for supporting Mobutu. I don't know what else to say on this.

Q: Well that's a pretty profound comment. I suspect that might be a good place to stop in terms of Zaire. So after the end of your tour in Zaire, you returned to Washington. Was that into the Africa Bureau?

Return to USAID Washington: Office of East and Southern Africa - 1971

HEADRICK: Yes, I went into the Africa Bureau and worked with the Office of East and Southern Africa.

Q: Just a historical note, I was the first Director of the Office of East and Southern Africa, many years before that.

HEADRICK: Jerry Knoll was the director at the time I was there. I was one of the Agricultural Back Stop Officers in the office. Incidentally, my earlier comment on our livestock work, one of the Ag officers from Lesotho came in with a great range management project he wanted to get approval for. I don't think he got beyond my office because my first questions were, “What sort of a commitment do you have from the host government to control livestock numbers? Who are the cattle owners? What kind of a commitment do you have to protect the grazing areas so you can set up a managed system?” The fellow stood there and looked at me and kind of stuttered and stammered and I said “If you can't answer those I can't support you.” So I feel my experience in Nigeria paid off elsewhere.

About once a year, perhaps twice, some years, I'd take a swing starting in Ethiopia and since Uganda was in an uproar, I never got into Uganda, of course we didn't have a program there, but I'd go from Ethiopia to Nairobi to Tanzania then back to the States looking at USAID supported agricultural activities and reviewing progress of projects. This was a tremendously diversified region in which to work and the governments had tremendous differences in capabilities.

Q: How would you characterize them, how would you compare them? Or is that drawing too much on your memory?

HEADRICK: That's drawing a lot on the memory. But roughly Ethiopia had the longest service on the part of the American aid. We were well received, well respected. Kenya, everybody wanted to have a project in Kenya, they still do. The Kenyans, because of that, are perhaps the least responsive in terms of total commitment. (They remain the “American” projects.) Tanzania was trying to develop an African form of communism at the time that I would visit the country. It was a difficult country for the Americans to work

in, but also I feel that some of our most long term impacts in African development have been in Tanzania. Once they accepted the technical advice and support, the people and the government generally followed it. Not always to our standards and that, but still I feel that Tanzania had a lot.

Incidentally, at this time the Tanzanian Ministry of Agriculture wanted to set up an agricultural parts supply warehouse. An American contract employee for the project was identified. He'd been a Logistics Officer in Vietnam, a retired Lieutenant Colonel. Of course, given the Tanzanian position, we couldn't allow his resume to go forward, so I took it on myself to rewrite his resume showing him teaching at various colleges when he was overseas in the military. It flew right by the Tanzanians. The Tanzanian Government never allowed the man to set up a parts supply warehouse. At that time the port in Dar-es-Salaam was clogged with shipping. The fellow made a tour through the port, started telling the Tanzanians what they should do and the next thing, which was probably more important, than what he was sent out for, he was working full time getting the Dar-es-Salaam port unclogged and materials moving through it. The Chinese had a section reserved exclusively for their use. At that time we were not supposed to be very friendly with the Chinese, however, they invited him into their warehouse to help organize and move their supplies around. It's a side light, but the man had a tremendous impact and it goes back to the fact that I had rewritten his resume rather than show that he had been in Vietnam.

Q: Well, the port was clogged at that time as I recall because it was an alternative to the southern Africa ports, for Zambia particularly.

HEADRICK: Correct. The Tanzam railway was under construction, the Tanzam road had been built. But still the port was clogged because people just couldn't get hold of the whole issue.

Assignment in USAID/Pakistan

I served in Washington in the Africa Bureau from roughly, I'd have to look at my resume, 1971 to '76. From there I went over to Pakistan as the Deputy Ag Officer. Pakistan was a tremendously interesting program. A program that was also subject to political whims, in that we were in the process of closing or phasing down our activities in Pakistan and then the war broke out in Afghanistan or the fighting. Because of the location of Pakistan, we opened up our AID program and went full blown there. But because of the atomic bomb issue and the allegations that they were producing the atomic bomb, we were required to phase down and then that was waived with the war starting up.

Q: That was the cause of the pre-Afghan war reduction.

HEADRICK: Correct.

End of interview